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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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POLITICAL INFORMATION ON THE SOVIET TROOPS IN GERMANY

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2. STALIN's death and its consequences among the Soviet troops in Germany:

[redacted] the first official statement about STALIN's illness was received by the Soviet troops in Germany with enormous excitement. [redacted] the word "excitement"

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[redacted] was the only right expression to describe the reaction of an average Soviet soldier in Germany. Many of the ORs were almost enthusiastic and listened to the news with shining eyes. It was easy to observe that the ORs consulted their more educated colleagues about details of STALIN's illness and possibilities of his recovery. The reason for their attitude towards the "beloved Leader's" illness was neither love nor hatred but a simple hope that something had happened which might change the dullness and boredom of their life.

The officers were much more reserved but all of them were undoubtedly shaken. The greater part of them were silent, some of them made very cautious comments but only a very small section discussed loudly the progress of STALIN's illness. [redacted]

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Immediately after the first communique Maj Gen KALINICHEVSKO, Commanding General 4 Guards Mechanised Army, held a conference of all unit Commanders and their Deputies for Political Affairs.

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read the official communique

He read the [redacted] and then informed the officers present that the following directives had been sent from MOSCOW:-

- (a) All leaves are cancelled. Leave documents already prepared were to be kept in the unit HQs. Personnel already on their way to the USSR could proceed to their destination.
- (b) Personnel temporarily attached to other units or on duty trips should be recalled at once.

When he had finished the routine instructions General KALINICHENKO went on "Comrades the situation is tense (TOVARISHCHI POLOZHENIYE NAPRYAZHENNOYE)! Our enemies can use this opportunity. Do not be panic-stricken but you ought to be in full readiness". Then the General pointed out that officers ought only to read the official communiques to their subordinates without adding their own comments. The matter could not be discussed and any questions could not be answered. (NYE KOMYENTIROVAT I NYE DOBAVLAT NICHEVO. NA VOPIROSY NYE OTVYECHAT).

In the succeeding days officers started to discuss the matter of succession. Two names only were mentioned as successors, viz. MALENKOV and MOLOTOV. No one mentioned BERIYA. The "ZAMPOLIT" was silent. He listened and observed as he had been instructed in POTSDAM to do. The Counter Espionage personnel was extremely busy but in FIL'OV "the local BERIYA" Sen Lt Boris Aleksandrovich BIRYUKOV disappeared for several days and reappeared only after STALIN's death. Apparently he was busy in other units or preferred to disappear for several days.

Generally speaking officers thought very reasonably. Almost all agreed that MALENKOV would be the leading personality but that there would be a complete change of the general position. They realised that there is no one in the KREMLIN who could be a second STALIN, a man of his strength and his persistence (NASTOYCHIVOST). Some of the officers said that "STALIN could easily keep a pair of horses but now the coachman would not keep even one horse" (STALIN MOG DYERZHAT DAZHE PARU LOSHADYEV NO ZDYES KUCHERU NYE UDYERZHAT I ODNOY).

STALIN's death was received rather calmly. People were already accustomed to the fact that it was inevitable. But it was obvious that his death was received with a sigh of relief by everyone - officers and ORs alike. No one was really sorry. They discussed all that had happened but everyone was very careful because the Counter Espionage and Political staffs were still busy in listening and watching.

MALENKOV as STALIN's successor did not surprise the officers. They only commented on his future position expecting a number of difficulties. There were no differences in opinions that MALENKOV is a new man for the greater part of the Soviet citizens. "If we know MALENKOV from the XIX Party Conference" commented the officers, "the people do not know him at all".

[redacted] one fact was obvious and very significant. It immediately became clear that the Government, the Party and in the Armed Forces the Political staff, were dead frightened and for some time lost their moral balance. It could be easily observed during the conferences and private talks with the Political officers, Party instructors, organisers and others. They

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lost their firmness, they lost something which could not be described. Maybe they felt like passengers in a bus from which the driver had suddenly leapt out, leaving the bus in full career with nobody at the wheel. The Party "leaders and teachers" became more friendly, they smiled in an embarrassed manner and began to be sociable and rather informal in their attitude towards others. The "monolithic unity of the Party" was undoubtedly shaken [redacted]

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[redacted] the shock was such a powerful one that the Party would never recover its previous strength and unity.

The officers were of course particularly interested in the personnel changes at the highest level in the Armed Forces. The trio VASILEVSKIY, ZHUKOV and BULGANIN was discussed cautiously but there were rather uniform opinions. In discussing these three men officers often added also VOROSHILOV as an Army and Political personality.

[redacted] Marshal VOROSHILOV, in spite of the fact that he is considered an old man and not a great soldier, is popular and respected among the military as well as the civilian population, as a man who had an outstanding revolutionary record before 1917 and after. [redacted] this was a reason for his present position, for the Party apparently pushed him forward as one of STALIN's close friends on the one hand and a popular person on the other. He apparently would act as a safety valve and a link between the KREMLIN and the nation.

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Marshal BULGANIN is not popular among the officers and they do not know him very well but rather dislike him as "a CHEKIST". The officers believe that he is considered in the KREMLIN as a wise and experienced politician and he would act as a "Political KOMMISSAR" in the Armed Forces.

Marshal VASILEVSKIY is very little known to the mass of officers. Senior officers know that he has brains and is a military expert with enough political experience to know how to live and survive in the vicinity of the KREMLIN. The mass of officers were not satisfied with BULGANIN's return as the Defence Minister and many of them grumbled that if any change was really necessary then the best would be to replace VASILEVSKIY by ZHUKOV and not by BULGANIN.

Marshal ZHUKOV is the most popular person in the Soviet Armed Forces and is also very popular among the Soviet population. There are still various rumours about the reasons for putting him "in cold storage" after the war, but the fact that he was in cold storage made him even more popular among people who believe in him than anyone whom the KREMLIN bosses dislike as a potential ally of those who suffer as a result of the KREMLIN policy.

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[redacted] the story of ZHUKOV's affair as [redacted] heard [redacted] in MOSCOW. His main crimes were that during the war he became very popular and that the fighting troops believed that he won the war against Germany. ZHUKOV himself was not a diplomat and talked too much. He apparently made some promises concerning social changes after the victory, mentioning the abolishment of the collective farms system. Anyhow whatever he promised the soldiers, MOSCOW was shaken and afraid of him. After the capitulation of Germany ZHUKOV in his various speeches used to

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say "we won the war" without mentioning the "greatest leader in history". Finally he suggested that the victorious Army ought to march in a triumphal procession from BERLIN to MOSCOW in order to show the Soviet population their liberators returning after victory. That was too much for the KREMLIN gang. They apparently became dead scared of some "triumphal salvos" in MOSCOW in case of such a celebration. ZHUKOV was recalled from Germany and his case was taken by the POLITBURO itself. During the investigation STALIN attacked ZHUKOV very strongly and insisted on reducing him to the rank of Colonel. BERIYA supported STALIN against ZHUKOV. But something or someone saved ZHUKOV. Most probably some of the POLITBURO members called STALIN's attention to the fact that ZHUKOV is well known abroad and that his degradation would make a very bad impression there. ZHUKOV's degradation also would have shaken the Soviet people who considered him a great soldier and they would never understand why a man who had won the STALINGRAD battle and taken BERLIN should be so treated. In any case ZHUKOV was saved but was sent to CDESSA and then to the URALS.

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many officers thought that BERIYA hates ZHUKOV and vice versa. But on the other hand BERIYA is a wise man and he knows how popular ZHUKOV is. Therefore it is quite possible that since STALIN became ill and it was clear that it was the beginning of his end BERIYA began to protect ZHUKOV in order to exonerate his sins towards him. however, ZHUKOV would never forgive BERIYA and sooner or later a clash between them would occur.

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3. The Physicians Affair:

When the disclosure of the "plot" and the arrest of the doctors were announced almost everyone believed that this was a true story. People were convinced that there was a large scale clandestine organisation which attempted to make a coup d'etat. "The enemies' attempt to seize power" (VRAGI KHOTYAT ZAKHIVATIT VLAST) was officially reported and the average officer and private soldier believed it. There was almost a panic in the USSR. Apart from the arrest of the so-called "KREMLIN doctors" a number of physicians were arrested all around the country. Panic rumours reached the Soviet troops in Germany and people loudly discussed the affair. There was information that a number of pharmacies and chemists were also involved in the plot, ("APTYEKI DAZHE BYLI ZAMYESHANY"). The normal Russian anti-Semitic feelings increased very considerably and the Government became almost popular for some short period of time.

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When the doctors were released the reaction was even stronger than when the "poisoners" were arrested. There was general perplexity and exasperation. Of course, there were not so many loud comments and discussions as when the doctors were arrested for everyone realised that it was much safer to keep quiet. But people could not stop discussing and talking about this fantastic story. Officers and men started to talk about BERIYA who normally was not a subject of discussions. People considered themselves deceived in a most indecent way. Once again they believed in the Government statement. Once again the denouncers were praised and gratified and the "people's anger" was raised against the "traitors and poisoners". And then the Government withdrew its accusations and released the "saboteurs".

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[redacted] the "Physicians Affair" was disastrous for the prestige of STALIN and BERIYA as well as for the authority of the Party, Government and Security Police. The whole story appeared to be another dirty affair of the KREMLIN bosses. No one believed that RYUMIN, a man who was made responsible for the whole affair, was really an important and decisive person. Since railways first started to operate in Russia there has been a proverb that whenever there is a railway accident a big boss is never guilty but always an unknown signalman did something wrong. RYUMIN is generally considered a proverbial "guilty signalman" (STRYELOCHNIK VINOVA) and BERIYA's victim in this affair. But officially the big boss BERIYA and his late super-boss STALIN were RYUMIN's victims.

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[redacted] since the release of arrested doctors BERIYA is more hated than he was before.

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The higher authorities and the Army Political Staff were also highly excited but in another way. They were apparently frightened and shocked themselves and extremely anxious to know how their subordinates reacted to the unexpected finale of the Physicians' rhapsody. As it was after STALIN's death the Counter Espionage personnel was busy observing and listening and the units' political officers were instructed not to comment on the affair at all (MIKAILICH POLITINBORMATSII NA SICHOT OSVOBOZHDENIYA VRACHEY NYE PROIZVODIT) but to listen carefully and note who was saying what about STALIN's death, changes in the KREMLIN and the Physicians' Affair. They tried to do their best in collecting information but [redacted] never [redacted] any arrest for careless talk.

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4. The Amnesty:

[redacted] the Amnesty did not impress anyone. It was obvious that the number of people released would be very small. Everyone realised that the Government has to keep as many prisoners as possible in the camps because a mass release and closing of a large number of labour camps could easily cause an economic crisis. For the "construction of socialism" in the USSR is based on Forced Labour. Some officers and men dared to say that "the only case when STALIN really helped the people was when he died because some prisoners were released from the camps".

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5. The Army Military Council (VOYENNIY SOVIET):

[redacted] the Military Councils established at each Army HQ constitute one of the most important and decisive factors in the life of the Soviet Armed Forces.

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The Military Council at Army HQ level consists of three members: Army Commander (the Chairman), his Chief-of-Staff and one other member. While the Commander and the Chief-of-Staff are automatically members of the Military Council the third member is a Political Officer (a Colonel) nominated by the Party Central Committee in MOSCOW. He is an official representative of the Central Committee in the Army HQ and as such has access to all Political and Military matters concerning the Army units. Being nominally subordinated to the Army Commander he is connected directly (or through the Army Group HQ) with MOSCOW who instruct him.

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In the 4 Guards Mechanised Army the member of the Military Council was Col FURIN.

The Military Council holds its conference once or twice a month and also in case of important events. Depending on the situation and matters discussed other senior officers take part in the conferences, sometimes being all unit Commanders.

The material for a conference of the unit Commanders is discussed beforehand between the members of the Military Council in order to avoid any discrepancies during the conference itself.

During the Conferences the officers taking part are allowed to ask questions and even to discuss some problems. Sometimes there are very hot discussions in particular when the morale of troops is on the agenda.

The agendas of the Military Council Conferences as well as subjects for discussion are secret. All instructions given by the Military Council have to be observed and considered as orders.

6. Morale of the Soviet troops in Germany:

the general moral standard of the Soviet troops in Germany a very low one.

the main reasons for it are the boring life in the barracks, extremely severe restrictions cutting off the Soviet troops from the outside world, lack of amusements and the atmosphere of distrust. there are no differences in opinion between the Generals and the private soldiers about the life of the Soviet troops in Germany. All are affected in almost the same way by the ruthless and stupid restrictions.

Soldiers are not allowed to contact the German population and are confined to their barracks. Generals and officers are also confined in their quarters and are not allowed to invite or visit those whom they like but only those whom they are allowed to like.

There is a very strong antagonism between the officers and ORs based chiefly on distrust on both sides as well as on the bad example set by the officers. one of the weaknesses of the Russian people in general and of the Soviet officers in particular is belief that orders and instructions have to be observed not by the superiors but by the subordinates and by those who do not know how to disobey an order without being punished.

The ORs believe (and they are right) that officers force their soldiers to obey orders which they themselves disobey. In particular all instructions concerning drunkenness and contacts with the Germans, especially with German women, are regularly disobeyed by the officers. The ORs know about these things and often know many intimate details about their officers. it appears that "nothing could prevent a Russian from drunkenness".

(Russian) officers sacrifice everything including their own dignity and the prestige of the Russian officers just in order to get some vodka. typical example from one Conference of the Military Council when Col. ZHAVORONKOV, Town Commandant of EBERSWALDE, discussed the behaviour of officers in the local Officers' Club (DOM OFITSEROV). He said that the notorious Order No.0275 which forbade the sale and drinking of spirits in barracks and clubs was not observed by the officers. "We sell and

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we buy spirits in the Club" [redacted] "we get drunk and we rage in front of the German staff and we have to take out our drunken comrades" and so on. His speech which was perfectly justified was interrupted by a Lt. Colonel who asked him who ought to be blamed for such behaviour. "I am sorry to say" said the Lt. Colonel, "that our senior officers give the worse example and demoralise their junior colleagues and the German staff as well". And he told a story, which he had witnessed himself and which is an everyday story of the Soviet Officers Clubs in Germany. A Colonel arrived in the Club, ordered a meal and then gave a ten-mark note to a German waitress begging her to buy some vodka in the nearest German restaurant and bring it to him. After a long-whispered conversation the waitress apparently accepted the bribe and bought vodka for the officer. Soon the Colonel got drunk and was taken out from the Club. "That is the method" ended the Lt. Colonel, "in which we demoralise ourselves and make the Germans laugh at us". [redacted] the reaction of the audience was just a short period of dead silence and then the presiding General changed the subject.

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The ORs [redacted] trust some officers but it is a very difficult task to gain their respect and confidence because they believe that they always were and constantly are deceived by their officers.

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[redacted] the morale is lower in those units which consist of more developed and more educated soldiers. [redacted] in many [redacted] units [redacted] soldiers are influenced by their more highly educated colleagues and used often to ask their opinion and advice. On the other hand he pointed out that the time when KOMSOMOL members were the moral leaders of the non-Party soldiers is gone for ever. Statistics show clearly that in the majority of cases of breach of military discipline the offenders are the KOMSOMOL members who consider themselves a privileged class.

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[redacted] there were in Apr 53 160 ORs. Of these only one was a Party member, one was a Party candidate (expelled recently) and approx 80 were KOMSOMOL members. The remainder were non-Party. Almost all the 160 were town people from all parts of the Soviet Union. The only Party member had no influence at all. The Party candidate was expelled because he was found guilty for his wife's suicide. The KOMSOMOL boys were rather demoralised and the non-Party soldiers were undoubtedly the best element of both units. But these non-Party soldiers were in their greater majority against the Soviet regime and even committed some acts of technical sabotage, chiefly damaging car engines and causing some accidents. [redacted]

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[redacted] All officers and ORs hate the Counter Espionage personnel. [redacted] soldiers realised that the Counter Espionage personnel in the Armed Forces and the MVD are the same firm. [redacted]

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The Counter Espionage officers, called by the soldiers "black souls"

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(CHYORNIYE DUSHI) or "hounds" (LYAGAVIYE), are a privileged caste in Germany. They have more freedom of movement than anybody else, they are allowed to live abroad with their families which is forbidden even for Generals and they have great power. These privileges deepen the feeling of hatred among the troops which they supervise.

This state of morale is well known to the higher authorities who appear to be worried but are unable to change their attitude.

the three main "mortal sins" which make Soviet officers and ORs in Germany "demoralised" are drunkenness, visiting of German restaurants and relations with German women. The superior officers are completely helpless in fighting against this "demoralisation" but very few of them realise that the only remedy would be more freedom for the Army personnel. The only action which the Commanders were able to take was to send a demoralised officer to the Soviet Union. (The ORs are sent to the USSR only when they are sentenced to penal servitude). But now "deportation" home of officers is against the present MOSCOW policy.

one 1953 Conference of the Army Military Council these matters were discussed with Unit Commanders. The Divisional Commanders asked the permission of the Army Commander, Maj Gen KALINICHEVSKO, to send home demoralised officers. They pointed out that a number of them had on their records 50 and even more days of arrest and these measures did not work at all. The answer was that MOSCOW disagreed with this method. "We shall not send your officers to the Union and your duty is to bring them up" (MY VAM OFITSEROV NYE BUDYET OTPRAVLYAT V SOYUZ A VAM INH VOSPITYVAT KADO). "Put them under arrest even for a hundred days and bring them up" (SAZHAYTE INH I NA STO SUPOK I VOSPITYVAYTE).

two factors considered almost the most important in the morale of the Soviet troops in Germany and in case of a war against the West.

The first is that the dullness and hopelessness of life in the barracks without contact with the outside world results in any political event raising enormous excitement among the troops expecting a change in their life. Whether it was the war in Korea or STALIN's death the result was the same - troops got excited, hoping that something would happen and that they would have some "fun".

in case of a war even those who would be against the regime would fight just because a war would mean a change for them and excitement.

The second is the fact that apart from the general anti-war feeling among the troops in Germany everyone, General or Private, knows that the Soviet Army consists of two types of soldiers - "one who fights and the other who watches him" (ODEN VOYUYET A DRUGOY NABLYUDAYET ZA NIM).

the well known arrangements in the Soviet Army - the preventive troops (ZAGRANITSNYYE OTRYADY) are already prepared and chosen in the Army Group in Germany and the plan for blocking (ZASLON) of the first line troops is prepared in detail. Of course these details are known only to a very few officers. Unit Commanders do not know anything about it in spite of the possibility that their assignments as ZASLON for the zero hour remain in the sealed operational envelopes in their safes.

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This "ZASLON" [redacted] would be probably a powerful factor pushing forward the Soviet troops in case of a war.

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7. Defections and the attitude of the Soviet troops in Germany towards the West:

[redacted] in the atmosphere of fear and distrust in which the Soviet troops in Germany and the whole of the Soviet people live some subjects are not discussed openly and are not discussed even among close friends. Generally speaking officers and ORs do not usually express their opinions and feelings and after 35 years of training had become rather reluctant but this compulsory reluctance cost them a great effort for the Russians love to discuss everything and they need heart to heart talks, in particular when they drink.

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One of those subjects which are too dangerous to be discussed are defections. [redacted] in general they know that cases of defection to the West have occurred but no one dares to ask questions or to comment on information received. [redacted]

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The war in Korea is very seldom discussed. The general opinion among the officers is that the United States could finish the war any time they like. [redacted]

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8. Attitude of the Soviet troops towards the East German Republic:

[redacted] there is a general opinion among the Soviet officers and ORs in Germany that the East German Republic cannot be considered as a real ally. The average Soviet soldier does not trust the Germans whether they are Eastern or Western Germans. There is also a great deal of hostility towards Germans among the ORs. The officers believe that the Germans laugh at Russians and the Soviet "democracy".

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[redacted] there is much less hostility towards Germans among the officers than among the ORs. This "human" attitude of many Russian officers towards the Germans the latter owe to their womenfolk who do their best to make the Russian officers happy.

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9. Attitude of the Soviet officers towards the People's Democratic Republics in Europe:

[redacted] all Soviet officers in Germany realise that Russians are hated very sincerely among the population of the "People's Democratic Republics" in Europe.

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There is, however, a serious discrepancy in the opinions of the Political officers and their non-Political colleagues.

The Political personnel express an opinion, apparently an official one, that the Soviet Union has to keep Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the other "democracies" in its hands because if they were left alone they would be immediately seized (ZAIMVACHENIY) by Britain and America.

The other officers think that the Soviet Union cannot leave them alone because they would immediately join the West. The European People's Democracies are "imbued with the West and they dislike our spirit". (ONI PROPITANY ZAPADOM I IM LASH DUKH NYE NRAYITSYA).

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In their attitude towards their allies the Soviet officers in Germany pay special attention to Poland.

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[redacted] if the Polish Army should turn on them (PODVYEDIOT) it would be a disaster (PROVAL) for the Soviet Army Group in Germany.

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[redacted] the greater part of [redacted] officers believe that Marshal BOKOSOVSKIY is responsible for the safety of this "Polish bridge". [redacted] BOKOSOVSKIY in spite of his Polish origin was STALIN's trusted man put in charge of the Polish Army in order to make it as safe as possible. BOKOSOVSKIY is considered one of the best generals, possibly next to ZHUKOV, and it is known to almost everyone of the Soviet officers in Germany that the Poles hate him perhaps more than anyone else. [redacted] the fact that there have already been two

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attempts in Poland on ROKOSSOVSKIY's life are well known to Soviet officers in Germany working in the higher HQs or near them.

[redacted] in one of these attempts ROKOSSOVSKIY was wounded and spent two months in a hospital, [redacted]
[redacted]

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There are rumours among the Soviet officers in Germany about the guerrilla warfare in Poland directed against the Russians and the present regime there. They appear to be exaggerated but officers still talk about the derailing of Soviet transit trains and other acts of sabotage against the Russians.